

What CED Recommends:
Voluntary Universal Prekindergarten

1 Access: Children age 3 and up whose parents want them to enroll should have access to center-based preschool programs that meet recognized standards for fostering education and school readiness along with social and physical development in a safe environment.

2 Delivery: Preschool education consistent with recognized standards should be obtainable from a variety of providers, with parents choosing the setting most appropriate for their child's and family's needs.

3 Financing: While states should be responsible for ensuring universal access to prekindergarten and tying diverse providers into coherent systems of early education, the federal and state governments should share responsibility for financing early learning. To encourage equitable access across the nation, the federal government should provide funding sufficient to cover children from lower-income families by creating a new federal-to-state grant program and should also provide states with financial assistance to help develop the infrastructure needed for universal access. States should ensure that places are available in approved preschool programs for all children age 3 and up whose families want them to attend.

4 Infrastructure, quality improvement, and oversight: In addition to subsidizing direct preschool costs, the federal and state governments should make resources available to improve staff and facilities and provide technical assistance and monitoring.

5 Data and Research: Federal and state governments should improve data collection to ensure that comparable and reliable information is available on access, costs, and outcomes and should support research to expand our knowledge about most effective characteristics of early learning programs.

Learn More About Early Education –
Sign Up to Support It

Business leaders from across the country are endorsing CED's early education recommendations in *Preschool for All: Investing in a Productive and Just Society*.

Please consider adding your name to the growing list of endorsers who want to make educating our children from the earliest ages a national priority.

To join the list of endorsers, or for more information about the CED recommendations, please contact Christine Ryan at (202) 296-5860, ext. 29 or by email at christine.ryan@ced.org.

Why Early Education Matters continued from page 1

- Graduates of childcare centers in North Carolina's Smart Start program were approximately **half as likely to have serious behavior problems** in kindergarten. ("Smart Start: A Six County Study of the Effects of Smart Start Child Care on Kindergarten Entry Skills," 1999)
- The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, begun in the 1960s, followed 123 African-American children to age 27. Compared to a control group, children who attended a high-quality preschool program had **significantly higher income, home ownership and educational attainment**, while welfare dependence and criminal activity were significantly lower. (Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart, "High/Scope Perry Preschool Study," 1993)
- 7 out of 10 police chiefs said that, "providing more education child care programs and after-school programs" is the **most effective way to reduce juvenile violence**, compared to 17 percent who chose the next most popular selection, "prosecuting more juveniles as adults." ("George Mason University Poll of Police Chiefs," 1999)
- **85 percent of a person's intellect, personality and social skills are developed by age 5.** ("Purves, Body and Brain," Harvard University Press 1988, adopted from DW Thompson, "On Growth and Form," Cambridge University Press)



Preschool for All: A Priority
for American Business Leaders



"It is certainly clear, from a business point of view, that investing in early education should be the new national imperative. It is absolutely critical. Early education lays the foundation for later learning, for school readiness, for interpersonal skills. Prekindergarten reaches children at the critical moment, as their brains are developing, helping them to reach their true potential. Supporting universal prekindergarten is then not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do."



Roy J. Bostock, Chairman, CED

Mounting evidence tells us that early childhood education is an issue with serious social and economic implications - explaining why so many business leaders across the country are excited about early education as a means to economic development.

America's business community is beginning to understand the links between regional and national economic development and quality early education programs. By investing in high quality early education, the United States can ensure an educated workforce and our country's ability to compete in the international marketplace. In fact, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis has found that early childhood investments have a higher rate of return than spending on venture capital funds, subsidizing new industries such as biotechnology, building new stadiums, or providing tax incentives for businesses. Investment in high quality early childhood education has a lasting impact on successful economic development.

Art Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, stated "The return on investment for early childhood development is extraordinary, resulting in better working public schools, more educated workers, and less crime."

Why early education matters:

- **Every \$1 invested in preschool programs returns up to \$7 in savings** for remediation, welfare payments, unemployment, and other compensatory costs. (Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart, "High/Scope Perry Preschool Study," 1993)
- Cost-benefit studies continue to prove that preschool programs are sound public investments with **public returns as high as 12 percent, and combined public and private returns of 16 percent.** (Art Rolnick, and Rob Grunewald, "Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return," March 2003)
- Children who participate in early childhood programs have **lower rates of teen pregnancy; decreased delinquency; and, higher rates of employment.** ("The Task Force on Community Preventative Services," Centers for Disease Control, 2002)
- Graduates of high quality prekindergarten are **50 percent less likely to need special education services and 25 percent less likely to be held back** by the end of third grade. ("NYS Experimental PreK Evaluation," New York State Education Department, 1982 & "New York State Board of Regents Study on Cost-Effectiveness in Education," 1996)
- Children who attend preschool for two years are **twice as likely as children with no preschool experience to have the language, literacy and math skills and 1 1/2 times more likely to have the social, emotional and fine motor skills needed** to be ready for kindergarten. (Study initiated by Connecticut Commission on Children, 2004)

Preschool for All

Following the 2002 release of its report *Preschool for All: Investing in a Productive and Just Society*, CED launched a major outreach program on early education with the generous support of The Pew Charitable Trusts. This publication is intended to brief the business community about the economic and social benefits of investing in early education. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of The Pew Charitable Trusts. Information on CED's efforts, as well as an online version of the full report, is available at www.ced.org.

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Prekindergarten Lays a Crucial Educational Foundation



"People ask me sometimes, in all these years you have worked on education, what are the two things you have concluded are most important? The answer is simple: early childhood education and teaching." **James B. Hunt, Jr.**, Governor of North Carolina (1977-1985; 1993-2001)

- A recent study of Chicago Preschool Centers reports a **26 percent higher graduation rate for preschool participants** (high school dropouts cost society \$250 billion in lost earnings and foregone tax revenues annually).
- Education reformers increasingly recognize that efforts to improve student achievement are affected by differences in children's development, evident when formal schooling begins, and that gaps in knowledge and skills are already apparent when children enter kindergarten.
- Children who start school behind their peers are unlikely to catch up. Those children entering kindergarten with limited word reading skills are the most likely to have reading difficulties later and to require remedial education. Even with

- this subsequent extra help, they continue to lag – children without at least modest reading skills by the end of third grade are unlikely to graduate from high school.
- Poorly educated workers are increasingly unable to earn a living wage in a global marketplace where skills matter more than ever before.
- Society pays in many ways for failing to realize the learning potential of all its children – **from lost economic productivity and tax revenues to higher crime rates and diminished participation in the civic and cultural life of the nation.**



*In demanding the restoration of prekindergarten to New York State's 2003 budget, **Joel I. Klein**, Chancellor, New York City Department of Education, stated that "Principals and teachers across the system tell me that they can immediately tell which children have been through a Universal Pre-K program and that they are far more prepared for formal instruction in the early grades."*

Young Children Have Untapped Potential for Learning

- The U.S. approach to early education suffers from serious shortcomings. Formal learning programs with qualified instructors are limited and uneven, and early education and childcare programs are not well integrated.
- The U.S. lags most other developed countries in the availability and quality of learning opportunities for 3-to 5-year-olds who have not yet entered kindergarten. Current public investment levels are inadequate for building a strong early learning system.
- A recent National Research Council study on the science of early childhood development found that clear disparities in what children know and can do are evident before they begin kindergarten. These differences are associated with economic and social circumstances and are predictive of future academic performance.
- Many children are spending time in settings that do not take full advantage of their capacity to learn. Children have a greater power to learn than has been traditionally realized. The first five years are a time of enormous growth not only in socialization skills, but also in linguistic and conceptual competence. The pace of learning depends heavily on the environment in which the child grows up.
- Children can learn more in reading, mathematics, and science than was previously understood. This requires teachers who are deeply knowledgeable in how children develop in the early years. In an ideal scenario, each group of children in a preschool would be assigned a teacher with a bachelor's degree and specialized education related to early childhood.

The United States is Behind Other Countries

While the United States continues to debate over increasing its investments in young children, other industrialized countries have already recognized the benefits of such investments. Many nations far surpass us in making high quality early learning opportunities, operating on convenient schedules for working parents, available to all.

- **Belgium, France, and Italy** offer free programs for preschool children aged 3 to 6 and enroll 95-99 percent of this age cohort. Preschool lasts for 7 to 8 hours a day, and supplemental services are available before and after school and during holidays. Parents share the costs of the latter, paying fees tied to income.
- **Denmark, Sweden, and Finland** enroll 73-83 percent of their 3- to 6-year olds in early education programs that integrate education and care and also guarantee places in subsidized care to any child aged 1 and older with working parents. While heavily subsidized by government, parents in these countries are also charged income-related fees.
- **Austria, the Netherlands, and Spain** have preschool enrollment rates above 70 percent.
- **The United Kingdom** enrolls over 90 percent of its 4-year-olds in preschool.



*"Early education is most certainly the next wave of educational reform, which puts CED on the cutting edge of that reform. It's important to let business leaders know that the cause is an urgent one. The U.S. is simply playing catch-up with the rest of the industrialized world. Most advanced nations already invest in early education. Indeed, there is already a deep appreciation worldwide among global business leaders of the relationship between investment in early education and the quality of the workforce. All across Europe, early education and care are already part of the national infrastructure, long accepted as necessary in raising an educated, productive citizenry. Similarly, Asian countries have long valued early education of their youngsters." **Dr. Donna Shalala**, President, University of Miami*

Public financing is the dominant approach to paying for preschool in the industrialized countries of Europe. Parents share costs on an ability-to-pay basis in some cases, but their share is small and often limited to the "wrap-around" care needed by those who work.

The key problem in the U.S. is the lack of support for making the public investments necessary to give all children the strong start they need as they enter school (compare the \$20-25 billion annually spent on early care and education for children from birth to age 5 amounts to the roughly \$400 billion spent annually on elementary and secondary education).

Just as Americans realized the critical importance of publicly funded elementary and secondary education a hundred years ago, the time has come for a similar realization regarding investment in high quality prekindergarten programs.

- Today, **only 29 states require prekindergarten teachers to have teacher certification**, which requires a college degree. With the median annual earnings of U.S. preschool teachers standing at \$17,310 and no guarantee of health care and paid vacation, high levels of turnover plague the preschool and child care industries.
- Without requiring increased levels of training and offering commensurate pay, the early education field is unlikely to attract the highly qualified and stable workforce necessary to meet the growing expectations of parents and policy makers for measurable developmental outcomes for all children.
- Because the U.S. still views the education and care of young children as primarily a family responsibility, early learning opportunities are unavailable to many children. While access to publicly subsidized programs helps protect children against inadequate care, many lower-income families, who rely on these services, are denied public subsidies because of limited funding.
- Though Congress authorized full funding for Head Start programs by 1994, **current appropriations are only sufficient to permit 60 percent of eligible 3- and 4-year-old children to participate.**
- Uneven access to high quality early education opportunities contributes to learning gaps among children in the preschool years, and children who are behind when they enter school are unlikely to catch up with their peers. Uneven access can also be linked to the continual achievement gaps that are currently troubling elementary and secondary education.